

After Action Summary – Forest Oaks Apartment Fire of July, 5 2014—Prepared by Fire Chief Luiz Valdez and Police Chief Randall Wallace

Shortly after 1AM on July 5th, the Leon Valley Fire Department responded to a large fire at the Forest Oaks Apartments located at 6313 Evers Rd. Firefighters arrived to find multiple, 2-story apartment buildings on fire. Upon their arrival, emergency responders were told there were several missing people; including a small child, and observed the stairwell to the buildings impassable and the exit doors engulfed in flames, preventing escape.

Firefighters quickly triaged the entire scene; requested resources from multiple agencies, and entered the burning buildings in an aggressive attempt to evacuate and save people. This emergency was a 3-alarm fire, with all on-scene personnel immediately needed to perform rescue.

Firefighters requested support through our emergency dispatch from several mutual aid agencies including; Balcones Heights FD, Castle Hills FD, Acadian EMS, Shavano Park EMS, Helotes FD, Red Cross, off-duty personnel, and Bexar County.

One patient was transported by EMS, and later succumbed to fatal injuries. A second patient was evaluated on scene by another EMS unit. During the fire, we had two additional emergency calls; a medical emergency at another apartment complex and a call for smoke in a house on Timber Hill Drive. These were both managed thanks to our mutual aid partners, Acadian EMS and the Helotes Fire Department.

An investigation into the cause of this fire revealed that the fire was set by a person inside the victim's apartment, and the dollar loss is estimated at half a million dollars.

Our Firefighters, Police Officers, and our Dispatcher responded effectively against an overwhelming, tragic, and chaotic scene. Sixteen people were rescued, evacuated, or removed, and had their lives spared. The fire was contained within the two buildings preventing further tragedy throughout the complex.

In this review process, we identified a need to upgrade the City's VHF analogue signal as our primary dispatch and operations channel due to our surrounding mutual aid agencies using an 800 megahertz digital radio system. To address this issue moving forward, staff's recommendation is to upgrade our radio/communication system. This upgrade will enhance our dispatch, on scene operations, and equip our emergency personnel with an ability to talk directly to all our mutual aid agencies during large-scale incidents.

An item in this year's proposed budget addresses the initial start-up cost to begin this upgrade, and we have met with regional resources that are assisting us in developing a work plan to achieve this goal.

END OF REPORT.